

OSAKA

Lights, Flavour, Life



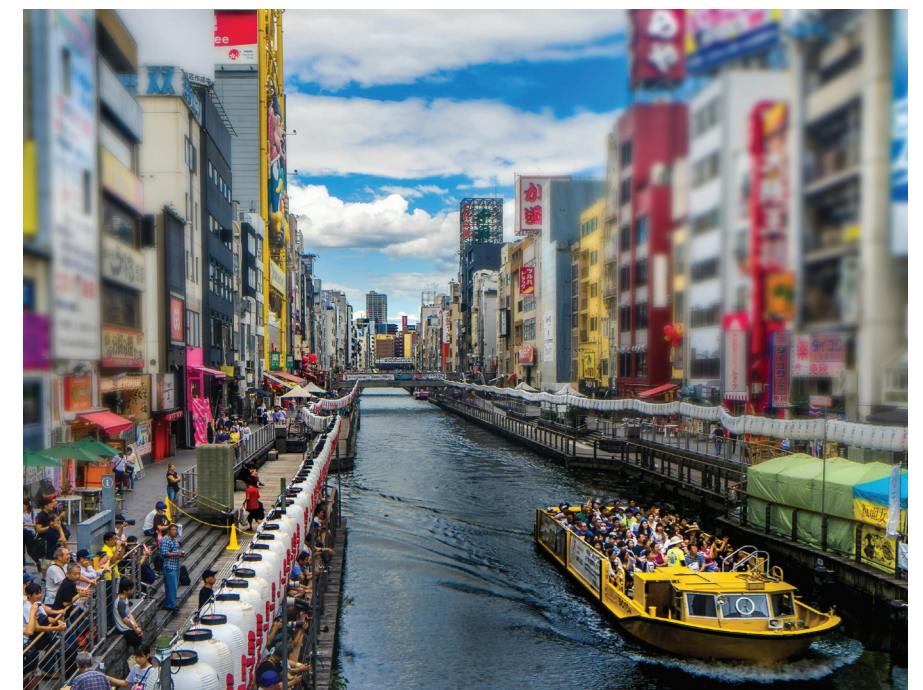
Osaka is the kind of city that grabs you by the collar and pulls you straight to the table. Anthony Bourdain once came here chasing *Kushikatsu* (deep-fried skewers) and *Okonomiyaki* (savory pancake), but what he uncovered was a city that fed more than hunger - bold, generous, and impossible to forget. That same spirit comes alive in the blaze of Dotonbori's neon nights, in the gardens and stone walls of Osaka Castle, in the roar of rollercoasters at Universal Studios, and the maple-lined trails leading to Minoh waterfall. Osaka never does things in halves. You get the neon, the castles, the parks, and the food, all side by side.

Dotonbori

If Tokyo dazzles with speed and Kyoto wraps with tradition, Osaka shouts with neon. Dotonbori is its beating heart - a canal lined with giant billboards and surrounded by streets packed with eateries, arcades, and shops that stay alive well into the night. Above the crowds, a crab waves its mechanical claws while the Glico Running Man stands out as one of Osaka's famous icons. Crowds spill into the shopping arcades that branch off from the canal, packed with everything from budget streetwear to quirky souvenirs. Japanese girls wander through in anime-style cosplay, stopping for photos beneath the flood of neon. Street performers add to the spectacle, and among them, a drummer hammering out beats on buckets always pulls a crowd. His rhythms mix with the sizzle of grills and the smoke of barbecue drifting into streets lined with ramen shops that never seem to close. This is the Osaka everyone comes to see, and no visit is complete without it.



In this spread,
Iconic Osaka Castle; Minoh Park cascade;
Dotonbori night and day; Cosplay in
Nipponbashi.





Shinsekai

For a step back in time, Shinsekai is the neighbourhood to explore. Built with a futuristic vision in the early 20th century, it has since become a retro time capsule. Its streets glow with neon and retro signs, arcades buzz with old-school games, and small eateries line the alleys. This is where Anthony Bourdain found his *Kushikatsu*, deep-fried skewers of meat and vegetables served with a dipping sauce.

Overhead, Tsutenkaku Tower stands as Shinsekai’s unmistakable landmark. Shinsekai’s retro character is what gives it its charm, and it remains one of Osaka’s most distinctive districts.

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Minoh Park

Just thirty minutes by train from central Osaka, Minoh offers a very different face of the city. Set in a forested valley, the walking trail passes the impressive Ryuanji Temple before reaching Minoh Falls, a 33-metre cascade. Autumn turns the maples along the path vivid red and gold, making Minoh one of Kansai’s top leaf-viewing spots. This is also when you can try the local treat, *Momiji Tempura*, maple leaves fried in a light, sweet batter. It is a local treat that adds flavour to one of the city’s most accessible nature escapes.

Universal Studios Japan

Afternoons in Osaka often flip the tempo. Universal Studios Japan brings film sets, rollercoasters, and colourful parades to life. Highlights include the wizarding world of Harry Potter and the playful chaos of Super Nintendo World, two of the park’s biggest draws for families. From Minion-shaped meals to themed souvenirs, the magic carries on beyond the rides. The mix of energy and spectacle mirrors Osaka itself, a city that knows how to play as hard as it eats.



Flavours of Osaka

Food has always been Osaka’s heartbeat. The city is known as the nation’s kitchen, and it earns the name with every bite. Street-side *Takoyaki* is a must, piping hot snack with octopus filling and a shower of bonito flakes on top. *Okonomiyaki* is another Osaka staple, a sizzling savoury pancake grilled with a mix of toppings. *Yakiniku*, Japanese barbecue, fills the air with the smoke of grilling meat, while ramen shops keep visitors fuelled late into the night. Many travellers even make the short train ride to Kobe for its world-famous beef, a meal that has become part of Osaka’s food story as much as the city’s own dishes.



Halal-friendly Osaka

For Muslim travellers, Osaka’s food paradise is increasingly accessible. In Namba, *Halal* Ramen Honolu serves ramen free from pork and alcohol. Yakiniku Panga offers *halal*-certified Wagyu beef and barbecue, bringing joy at the table to Muslim diners. Halal-friendly *Takoyaki* is appearing too, ensuring no one misses out on this Osaka classic.

Sweet Osaka

Desserts also play their part. *Mochi* (rice cake) filled with red bean paste and *Taiyaki* (Japanese fish-shaped cakes) stuffed with custard or chocolate are easy to find across the city. No trip is complete without a slice of Rikuro cheesecake, Osaka’s famously light, jiggly creation, stamped with the smiling chef logo, fresh from the oven. Long queues often form at the flagship Namba store, though branches at Shin-Osaka Station and Osaka Station make it easy for travellers to grab one on the go. These simple treats add the final touch to Osaka’s flavours.



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In this spread,
Super Nintendo World; Darumaon roof wall at Katsuo-ji Pagoda, Minoh; Halal Ramen bowl; Rikuro cheesecake; Takoyaki.